



# Intelligence Report

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THE FIRST PHASE OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING  
MAY 11 - MAY 26, 1959

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## Abstract

The first phase of the 1959 Conference of Foreign Ministers at Geneva which covered the period from May 11 until May 26 (when a recess was called to attend the funeral of Mr. Dulles), was taken up largely with a presentation by each side of its platform. The West, in an endeavor to engage in genuine negotiations to ease the crisis, presented the Western Peace Plan. This Plan makes numerous provisions taking account of Soviet objections to the West's proposals of 1955. Major new features include: 1) the phasing, with elections delayed for thirty months; 2) German participation (both East and West) in the reunification process, and 3) security provisions more favorable to the USSR. The Soviets, as they had previously repeatedly announced they would, pushed for acceptance of their January 10 peace treaty and for a demilitarized "free city" status for West Berlin. Each side discussed in some detail the flaws of the other side's proposals. However, there was no progress toward any common ground. The first phase ended with Gromyko's agreement to hold private or secret sessions with the Foreign Ministers of the UK, US and France (without participation of the German groups).

The opening days of the Conference were taken up with tactical maneuvers regarding the nature or degree of German participation and the question of Czech-Polish participation. The Soviets, while not successful in obtaining full, equal status for the German delegations, were apparently content with their propaganda success in focusing world attention on the presence of East Germany at the Conference. It was the first time that the West had even consented to admit representatives of the East German regime to a Conference of

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Foreign Ministers. The Czech-Polish participation question was not pressed by Gromyko although he promised to raise it again (and did).

This paper, which emphasizes the tactical and Western approaches to the Conference, should be read in conjunction with IR-8029, June 3, 1959, "The Soviet Position at Geneva: Status and Outlook" which likewise deals with the opening phase of the Conference.

In making an appraisal of the first round of the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference - the opening phase of the Conference in which plenary sessions only took place - it is necessary to weigh the developments during this two and a half week period against stated or assumed goals of the Western Powers and of the Soviet Union.

#### General Objectives of the West

The general objectives of the West are best summarized by quoting from the "Working Group Report as Revised and Approved by the Western Foreign Ministers, Paris, April 30, 1959":

(a) The objective of the Western Powers at the Conference is serious negotiation leading to an agreement with the Soviet Government, even if such an agreement has as its only result to help to make the status quo livable for a period of years. The Western Powers would proceed on this basis in the belief that the only hope of an ultimate detente, real disarmament and German reunification lies in change and development in the Soviet Union, which depends not only on the domestic evolution of the system but also on the limits which are set to its indefinite expansion. In their exchanges with the Soviet Government at Geneva, the Western Powers would seek to envisage an area of negotiation within which the general Western position could be improved. That is to say, the Western Powers should so far as possible think, not in terms of concessions and "fall-back positions", but rather in terms of new positions from which they themselves would derive advantage as well as the Soviet Government.

(b) If, as is probable, the objective set forth in the preceding paragraph is proved to be unattainable in the course of the Conference, the Western Powers will adopt the more limited objective of disengaging from the Conference in a way calculated to put them in the most favorable posture for securing the objective at a possible subsequent Conference at the Summit.

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Tactical Objectives of the West

In addition to these agreed general objectives there are specific tactical goals which the Western Powers have in mind during the course of the Geneva meetings. In particular, there is the question of Polish-Czech participation as proposed by the Soviets and of "representation" of the Federal Republic of Germany and the East German regime.

In an addendum to the "Working Group Report" cited above, the Foreign Ministers listed several additional tactical proposals, four of which had to do with the manner of presenting the Western Peace Plan at the Conference (no prior publicity unless press leaks or other developments warrant it; a summary to be published at time Plan presented at Geneva; the Plan should be presented in its entirety as soon as the substantive discussion is begun; the Plan should be explored first with Soviets prior to any determination on a separate discussion on Berlin). The Ministers also agreed that the Western Powers "would not fear a discussion of principles of a peace settlement, should that be tactically desirable and necessary at the Conference" but should utilize such discussion - to advance "our own views on the subject and to demonstrate the unreasonableness of Soviet proposals". The Ministers likewise agreed that "the Western Powers would endeavor to direct the Geneva discussions towards small private meetings as well as plenary sessions" as already proposed in the main body of the Working Group Report.

A further tactical consideration of the Western Foreign Ministers was the attitude to be taken toward a Summit conference. There are two aspects to this problem, namely, the conditions under which the West would be agreeable to a Summit meeting and the agenda. As a minimum prerequisite the Working Group stated that "it would be desirable that the meeting of the Foreign Ministers should have brought about the definition (or even merely an indication of the principles) of an interim Berlin solution". Following this, if agreement were reached on an agenda formula, the Foreign Ministers could discuss the place and date of such a Summit meeting.

Most of the goals described above have to do solely with tactics during the Geneva meeting. The essential aspect of these tactical goals as well as of the general objectives of "serious negotiation" and satisfactory disengagement from an unproductive meeting at Geneva, is the desire of the West and in particular of the United States, as the West's leading protagonist, to prevent the Berlin crisis' resolution in any form which can be construed as the first step on the "slippery slope". The West's primary aim, although negative and defensive in nature, is to prevent any erosion of its political or military stature in the European area.

### General Objectives of the Soviets

The general Soviet goals by contrast appear to be positive and far-reaching in scope. The Soviets hope to force the West to make concessions regarding the status of Berlin and regarding the recognition of the GDR. Achievement of the minimum goal - Western concessions on their position in Berlin - would in Soviet eyes be the beginning of the end of the West's stay in Berlin. Recognition of the GDR, even in some limited form, would achieve the Soviet's present aim in Germany, - the maintenance of a divided Germany - and would be an important step toward the realization of an even more fundamental Soviet objective - Western recognition of the permanence and legitimacy of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. While a divided Germany may not be a Soviet long range goal, it is obviously the only acceptable Germany for the USSR until such time as the Soviets can assure themselves of a Communist-oriented Western Germany. The Berlin crisis is the Soviet's most recent softening-up maneuver intended to weaken West German ties with the West. Soviet success in this alone would be an incalculable propaganda victory.

### The Main Proposals at the Conference During the First Phase

During the first phase of the Conference the West presented the Western Peace Plan for Soviet consideration. It represents an attempt by the West to modify its proposals as set forth in the 1955 Geneva Foreign Ministers' Meeting so as to meet Soviet objections to those proposals.

The Soviets persisted in presenting proposals on a Soviet draft peace treaty to be concluded with both Germanies and demands that the West withdraw from Berlin so that West Berlin might become a "demilitarized free city."

### The Western Peace Plan

The essence of the Western Peace Plan\* consisted of a four-phase proposal designed to bring about German reunification and security in Europe. During the first phase Berlin would be reunited on the basis of free elections held under quadripartite supervision; the city would, subject to the authority of the four powers, be administered by a freely elected Berlin council. All Allies would have access to the city and would continue to be entitled to station troops there. During the second stage of the Plan, the Four Powers would set up a mixed German committee (25 West Germans - 10 East Germans) to coordinate technical contacts, insure free movement of persons, ideas and publications between the two Germanies. It would also try to develop a draft law for general, free and secret elections which would be submitted to a plebiscite. The Four Powers would reduce their armed forces to specified levels and would negotiate on a further limitation of armaments. In stage three, not later than thirty months after the

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\* See IIB-114.4 for complete text.

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signature of the agreement, there would be elections for an all-German assembly to draft an all-German constitution. Upon the establishment of an all-German Government a limitation of forces, indigenous and non-indigenous, would be established in an area to be specified. Until conclusion of a peace treaty, the Four Powers would retain only those of their rights and responsibilities which relate to Berlin and Germany as a whole, including reunification and a peace settlement, and, as now exercised, to the stationing of troops in Germany. Special arrangements might be made if Germany should decide to adhere to a security pact. A further reduction of forces of the Four Powers would take place. Following the conclusion of a peace treaty (stage four), no power would station forces in any country in the (Central European) area without the consent of the country involved.

The main arguments of the West in support of the Plan were: 1) it takes account of the Soviet objection on the timing of all-German elections by postponing them for thirty months; 2) it takes account of the Soviet requirement that there should be German participation in the reunification process; 3) it provides security arrangements which would be acceptable to the Soviets so as to meet their (incorrect) allegation that the West's 1955 proposals on reunification were contingent upon Germany joining NATO; 4) it would solve the Berlin problem.

The Soviet objections to the Western Peace Plan were 1) that it was put forward insincerely since the West did not really expect the USSR to accept it; 2) that it was a new Gordian knot; that the implementation of the various parts was conditioned on progress toward reunification; 3) that the Plan's provisions for free elections were unacceptable; 4) that the composition of the all-German committee was unacceptable; 5) that there were no detailed provisions for a peace treaty; 6) that there were no provisions prohibiting the introduction of foreign nuclear weapons into Germany; and 7) that the proposal on Berlin was unacceptable.

#### The Soviet Peace Treaty Proposals

The Soviet proposals on conclusion of a peace treaty represented non-essential modifications (apparent "concessions") on the January 10 Soviet draft peace treaty (IIB-100, March 6, 1959). The apparent concessions were 1) that the two Germanies would not be required immediately to leave NATO and the Warsaw Pact (this concession dates from 1955); 2) that membership in regional economic organizations could continue and the united Germany could make its own decisions as to which it would continue to belong to; 3) Germany could conduct research in the peaceful uses of atomic energy; 4) Germany would not be hindered from incurring the rights and obligations of Article 51 (self-defense) of the UN Charter (a particularly specious concession, since Germany would be allowed to subscribe to the UN in any case).

Western objections, as voiced during the Conference, are that:

- 1) the Soviet Treaty would be concluded with the Federal Republic and the so-called German Democratic Republic and not, as such a treaty should be, with an all-German Government, freely chosen by the German people; 2) conclusion of a treaty with the two Germanies would require recognition of the East German regime which the United States has no intention of doing; 3) "the concept of two existing German states representing the indivisible sovereignty of the German people is unacceptable both in legal and political theory and would be wholly unworkable in practice" (Herter speech, May 18); 4) the disarmament features do not have general applicability but are discriminatory; 5) conclusion of a treaty with the two Germanies would "set the four powers' seal on the division of Germany"; 6) the Soviet Treaty would not be freely negotiated but imposed and would as a result be neither just nor enduring; 7) the Soviet proposals in the field of security failed to provide for "verification" by inspection and control.

#### West Berlin

The West insisted that the Soviets' arguments for changing the status of West Berlin were fallacious. The West made it abundantly clear that in its view (Herter, May 20; May 26), contrary to Soviet (Gromyko, May 15) and East German declarations, West Berlin is in no way a part of East Germany nor subject to East German sovereignty. The West also stated the question of Berlin could ultimately only be solved in the context of German reunification. Specific Soviet allegations regarding West Berlin as a center of espionage and propaganda were not dealt with in detail during the first phase of the Conference.

#### Developments with Regard to Western Tactical Goals

With regard to the tactical goals of the West it can be said that the first phase of the Geneva Conference resulted in partial successes and some concessions. Certain tactical problems have not yet manifested themselves.

The question of full participation of the Czechs and Poles, following vigorous initial protests by the West, was left in a state of limbo by Gromyko who regretted that there was no early decision on this question but was certain there would be one in a few days. The course of the meetings so far has apparently not encouraged him to revive this issue. Should the West and the Soviets agree on any substantive issue, however, so as to warrant Polish or Czech participation in questions concerning Germany, the matter would no doubt be revived. The further insistence of the Soviets on participation of either or both of these countries would undoubtedly raise the additional problems of possible Italian and other Western participation.

In their March 26 note to the Russian Government, the West, with regard to German participation, said:

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"The [United States] Government also notes that the Soviet Government agrees with the proposal made in its note of February 16 that German advisers should be invited to the meeting on May 11 and be consulted."

Thus, although the Western Powers would have preferred to have no Germans in the Conference room so as to avoid any indication of yielding on the GDR recognition question, the West was committed to German attendance in an advisory capacity. The establishment of this advisory status was the initial problem faced by the Conference. The Soviets in all references prior to the Conference had defined the German role in terms not of "advisory status" but of "representation" - a word giving the Soviets ample room for their opening maneuvers at the Conference. The first planary session of the Conference was delayed several hours by the Soviet effort to achieve a status for the East German (and thus automatically for the West German) delegation equal to that of the Four Major Powers. This was to be done by equal numerical representation and seating arrangements (at a horseshoe table with the two German delegations as simple extension of open ends). Gromyko also insisted on the unrestricted right of the German delegations to be heard. After much discussion it was finally agreed that a round table would be used for the Four Major Delegations with two separate square tables for the two sets of German advisers close to, but not touching, the main Conference table. It was also agreed that a request of either of the German advisers to speak would be communicated to the Chairman of the Conference (a rotating function) who in the absence of objection from any major participant would call on the German adviser to speak. It was also privately agreed with Gromyko that objections would not be made to the German advisers' request unless the privilege was being abused, in which case any Minister could raise a point of order and the Chairman would recess the Conference until the Ministers of the Four Major Powers had decided upon a method to correct the abuse.

During the course of the first phase of the Conference the two German delegations both spoke several times. On one occasion (May 18) the East German Foreign Minister Bolz was recognized by the Chairman of the day, Foreign Minister Gromyko, and began to speak before any Western Foreign Minister could object. On this particular occasion Secretary Herter had understood that he had received prior notification from Gromyko that Gromyko would recognize the Secretary as the opening speaker of the day since Gromyko himself did not intend to speak.

In sum, the Soviets have succeeded in focusing world attention on the GDR, in itself a propaganda victory of some moment, and have also succeeded partially in their original aim of achieving "representation" on a parity basis vis-a-vis the Federal Republic of the East German regime at the Conference. On the other hand the West succeeded in preventing full equality for East Germany with the four participating powers and the concomitant de facto recognition that this would have implied in the public mind.

The Western tactical objectives with regard to the presentation of the Western Peace Plan have been very largely met insofar as they are applicable at the end of this stage of proceedings. No advance publicity was given to the "Western Peace Plan" until the day before its official presentation in the Conference when a detailed paraphrase was given to the press although its major features were reported by the press a week before the Conference began. The Plan was presented in its entirety as soon as the substantive Geneva discussions began (at the Fourth Session - following the opening statements of the Foreign Ministers). During the opening phase of the Conference the plan was discussed in some detail, in particular with regard to Berlin, without doing violence, however, to the agreed requirement that a separate discussion on Berlin should only take place after the Plan had been thoroughly explored with the Soviets. It could not be said that the Plan has been jointly "explored" with the Soviets but on the other hand the Berlin issue has only been discussed by the West in the general setting of the Peace Plan. As to the Ministers' agreement not to fear a discussion of principles of a peace settlement, events during the first phase of the Conference did not present an issue in this regard. The West did, however, make clear that it would not subscribe to any proposals for separate peace treaties with the two governments and harped on the theme that a general peace settlement could only come after reunification. The entire Soviet (and East German echoing) emphasis during this phase of the Conference was on Berlin and peace treaties with the two Germanies. The Soviets avoided any discussion of wider issues, and the Western Allies as a consequence had no occasion to deal with the broad issues of a peace settlement.

As even the basic prerequisites agreed upon by the Working Group as conditions for a Summit Conference were not met during the opening phase of the Conference, there was no problem on this score. The course of the Conference until May 26 did not warrant any thought of Summit preparations.

#### Developments with Regard to Western General Objectives

During the opening phase of the Conference the West made no progress in achieving its general objectives. There was no serious negotiation which could lead to an agreement with the Soviet Government. It is in fact not unreasonable to say that this phase of the Conference was devoid of negotiation as such. Both sides spoke, presented platforms, arguments and rebuttals. No single item, however, was agreed, nor was any progress made in approaching agreement on either Western or Soviet goals (except for the tactical aspects with regard to the Conference arrangements and procedures).

#### Developments with Regard to Soviet Objectives - General and Tactical

Progress toward one Soviet goal - the recognition of East Germany by the Western Powers - was achieved by the Soviets, as has already been noted, in the Soviet success in having the two German delegates present at the Conference in an advisory status. The theatrical manner in which the Soviets,

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and even more so the East Germans, handled this lent the success an air of importance not actually warranted by the facts. Moreover, even in the limited advisory capacity in which they are participating in the Conference, the East Germans, for the first time since the inauguration of the GDR by the Soviet Union, are dealing directly with the three Western Allies. This in itself is no mean achievement and the accordance of any kind of status to the GDR by the West may have ultimate repercussions in connection with possible reunification.

In their main objective of securing recognition of the GDR however, the Soviets, like the West, made no apparent progress during the first phase of the Conference. Soviet tactical aims, while obviously unannounced can to some extent be deduced from the course of Soviet actions during the first phases of the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Geneva.

It is apparent that the Soviets have deliberately tried to isolate the West Germans. In his opening statement (May 13) at the Conference, Gromyko stated that the "position of the Government of the Federated German Republic has so far represented a considerable burden, which impedes the attempts of states which are aimed at transforming Europe into a durable stronghold of peace." On May 15 he noted such "facts" as "the equipment of the Bundeswehr with atomic and rocket weapons", and "revanchist pronouncements in West Germany." He went on to say that many aspects of the present policy of the Federal Republic were "adopted to skyrocket tension" and asked "how can European states and especially those neighboring on Germany remain undisturbed if West Germany states its territorial claims." Such statements as these are clearly designed to impugn the respectability and the motives of West Germany. It seems unlikely, however, that the Soviet efforts have had much effect in neutral countries and certainly they have been completely disregarded by the Western Allies (NATO) not present at Geneva.

As is clear from the laudatory remarks directed towards the British by Gromyko (for example, in his opening statement on May 13 with regard to Macmillan's trip to Moscow), the Soviets also intended to exploit differences of view between the UK and the US. Although the British from the outset have advocated a "flexible" Western approach, there appears to have been no further "softening" as the result of Soviet divisive efforts at the Conference.

The Soviets not only attempted to discredit West Germany but tried to make it appear that a clique - the West German Government - as distinguished from the SPD and the German people as a whole - has been solely responsible for the adamant and militaristic posture of the Federal Republic (Gromyko in the Eleventh Session).

The Soviets seem to have wanted to avoid any sudden explosion occurring in the Berlin crisis. They scrupulously avoided any untoward moves of their own and thus precluded any steps by the West which might lead to explosive results. The smooth passage of the original ultimatum date of May 27 with no incidents whatsoever is a clear indication that the Soviets were

particularly anxious not to upset the apple cart during the initial phase of the Conference. (It might even appear that the Soviets were secretly gratified that the timing of the Geneva Conference enabled them to avoid a decisive act on May 27). It is indicative of their intention to play down the explosive quality of the situation that on May 27 Khrushchev was on a trip to Albania (irrespective of what he said while in Albania) and Gromyko decided to attend the funeral of the former Secretary of State.

Together with this apparent intention to prevent a sudden boiling over, the Soviets persisted in a stubborn refusal to consider any presentation at the Conference other than their own. In essence it is as though the Soviets were oblivious of the fact that the West had made any proposals at all, since the Soviet response has always been to harp incessantly on their own two themes - Berlin and the Peace treaty. Fearing the threat of Soviet turnover of access controls and the inherent dangers of such an action, the West has made every attempt to arrive at a solution satisfactory in its main points to both sides. The Soviets doubtless hoped that dissension among the three Western Powers would result, although during the first phase of the Conference no Soviet progress in this respect was apparent. The Soviet maneuver was also designed to force the West to show its "retreat" or "fall-back" positions. To the extent that the West in the Twelfth Session felt it necessary to expand its presentation on Berlin, the Soviet tactic was successful.

### Conclusion

Since this report covers only the first phase of the 1959 Conference of Foreign Ministers at Geneva it is not possible to draw any final conclusions. The trend of the Conference during this initial stage was along somewhat different lines from the 1955 meeting of Foreign Ministers who came to Geneva to discuss European security and the problem of Germany (and limitation of armaments and the reduction of barriers between the Soviet Bloc and the free world) on Western terms. That conference, which reached no decisions, did not convene in the shadow of a Berlin crisis and took place following, rather than as a possible preparatory step towards, a Summit meeting and had the avowed purpose of implementing instructions of the heads of government.

At the end of the first phase of the present Conference it was apparent that, in spite of the threat to peace inherent in the Soviet threat to turn over controls to the East Germans with regard to Western access rights to Berlin, the West made a genuine effort to negotiate in its presentation of the Western Peace Plan. Western efforts in this direction were generally appreciated both in NATO countries and elsewhere in the free world. In spite of the great pressure upon the West which the Soviet threat to Berlin poses in psychological terms, the Western Powers remained effectively unified and made no basic concessions with regard to the status of West Berlin or to the reunification and security of Germany.

A subsequent report will cover developments from May 27 until the recess called on June 19.

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